

Bill Dowdy

11/98, T1, S1

JG: ...off of there. I got another one with me, but, you know, that looks like that might...might work. [tape interruptions] I was wonderin', Bill, if you might start with like how long you've been here, a little bit of your background and, of course, dealing with any of your observations or activities or that with the upper Grande Ronde watershed, which is everything from \_\_ to the head waters, which means like Catherine Creek, of course, the tributaries. And so if we...I can go through a few things that I had questions about like, you know, for instance, education, the beaver \_\_ like that, but if we maybe start...

BD: I've been La Grande since 1950. We came over here a little bit in '49 to check things out, but I actually...we actually here in 1950. So it'll be...in a few months it'll be forty-nine years that we've actually lived here because, of course, we lived here in the year of '50 so that was one year. And I've walked and fished and hunted over about everything all the way from, well, almost from Troy to Grande Ronde Lake on the Grande Ronde River. And, you know, as I mentioned to you over the phone, in some of those early years there was such a massive amount of sheep on everything, especially the Catherine Creek country, the, um, Minam...Little Minam River country. I would see thousands of head of sheep up on the tops of the ridges on...especially up on the very top of Little Minam up on Mud Spring Flats and then, of course, all around the Meadowbrook, Beaver Creek, and so on and so on. There were just... That was always so impressive to me 'cause everywhere we went there was just flocks and flocks of sheep. And, of course, their...sheep is a very traumatic critter...thousands of head of sheep running over a lot of the...

JG: Probably a lot to do with how...how the herd \_\_\_\_.

BD: Yeah, but they would just grub everything down, you know. I saw up on... In fact, they did contouring up on above Little...

JG: Mud Springs.

BD: ...up on Mud Springs, you know, and I was up there when they were doing that. There were... There were trenches cut in that...in that volcanic ash on that hillside that would be ten feet deep and not over two-and-a-half, three feet wide. And then used to go down into the valley down toward Ron Dow. At that time you could cross the river at Ron Dow. I don't think you can do that anymore. And, uh,...

JG: What about Mud Springs, Bill, where you saw that routing and like that. Were they pretty much to where there's a lot of siltation that came down into the creeks from that?

BD: Oh, yeah, yeah. Because a fellow that named Ken Keeling that used to work for Boise Cascade had a marvelous presentation and I heard him a couple of times about the deposits of the ash from they always say Mt. Mazama, but I'm sure there were a lot of other volcanic eruptions.

JG: I think that was the most recent one.

BD: Yeah, the most recent was Mazama. And how it would blow a drift on one side of the mountain and blow the...apparently the wind gusts and things would blow the...take the soil off the other side. And he did it in the context of where pine grew and where fir grew. But that whole hillside I had a...you'll get me...you'll get me to rambling here. I had... The time that Mt. St. Helens blew I was in the dental office and a little old guy came in with two or three little medicine bottles, glass medicine bottles, filled with stuff. And he was such a joker and he said, "Well, what do you think this is?" And I said, "Well, I'll bet you that's ash from Mt. St. Helens." And he said, "That's right." He said, "I got this up Yakima," or somewhere out where there was a lot of ash. Then he held up another bottle, he said, "What do you think this is?" And it was kind of gray colored and I said, "Well, it looks like ash, but it's grey." He said, "Well," he said, "that's off the Minam River." And he said, "There's an embankment there of pure ash that's fifty feet deep, fifty feet thick." I've talked to the...uh, oh, what' the name of it over here at college...the geologist...I never can think of his name.

C: VanSlide?

BD: Yeah. No, it isn't VanSlide. Anyway, his wife has the photography studio downtown. And he commented about the...the ash and things. This is very, very loose soil and so the grazing of the cattle and the sheep on those mountainsides the erosion would just...

JG: Didn't take much to move...

BD: It would just move it right down the hill and right into Catherine...or Minam and Catherine and all these creeks because these hills would be covered with that ash. But...interesting from the standpoint of the fish, the bull trout, or we called 'em dolly pardons, so forth, is all under protection now. And at that time it was considered a...in '50s it was considered a predator fish on the spawning salmon. And we used to go up on Catherine Creek or up on...especially Catherine Creek and also Little Minam and so on and you could catch a half a gunnysack full of bull trout 'cause there was no limit on 'em. They said, "okay, let's get rid of these" because they were considered...and I think they were a really heavy predator on the salmon eggs. But I know we went up on...I think I was on the Little Minam, I can't remember now...it was either the Minam or Catherine and golly, we could just roll stuff along the bottom and catch bull trout just as fast as you could pull 'em out of the water. And some of 'em were big, especially the Little Minam had bull trout. Boy, in the Minam River, too, I used to go into what was called a big burn there up above the, oh...

JG: Land ranch?

BD: The ranch there and, gosh, there were bull trout in there that were two feet long. And I don't know whether any of that's still in there or not. I haven't been in there for twenty-five years. But this whole Grande Ronde drainage was so impacted by cattle and sheep, to me, in those years. And of course, that's all gone. I don't think there's any grazing on anything now.

JG: I think they still have a few allotments, but it's a \_\_\_\_.

BD: There's some allotments on Spring Creek.

JG: Yeah.

BD: Because our Grande Ronde Bird Club has been dealing with that in that area where they put up the new fences and stuff up there on Spring Creek. But I was there last year helping put up some bird box stuff. And there was a flock of sheep that came by, I'm sure, that was twelve, fifteen hundred sheep. And they were moving them along, they weren't...they weren't just sitting and grazing. But there were a lot of sheep in this country in years past. As I say, I've fished everything from Troy to all the streams and stuff as they went along.

JG: Do you recall, Bill, the...I guess maybe a good place to start would be with the dam there at Perry when you said it was...it blocked, you know, \_\_.

BD: I called some people and as nearly as they can tell, and Horton Andrews is...he's over eighty, he's in his early eighties...and he was tellin' me about the...the dam and the flume that went into the millpond and so on and so on. And I remember the old-timer that was telling me the stories about going up there and I called his widow. And she thinks...the best we could figure out that that dam was blown out probably either 1928 or '29. I know Homer Campbell lived in the house right directly across the street where \_\_ does. And we visited a lot on stuff and I've never seen anybody so excited as when he found those...I think he found thirteen salmon reds and Chris and I were visiting about it at noon because \_\_ bought the house, we think, in '56 and I would guess that that was probably '53 or '54 that he found those salmon reds and couldn't figure out why salmon had gotten back up on the Grande Ronde again. 'Cause there was no salmon and no steelhead until that dam was blown out. Now there could've been steelhead or salmon, they were going up Catherine Creek and they were going up Indian Creek and that. And we used to picnic a great deal. We... When we had our kids we were out all the time. We camped and picnicked and fished almost weekly and Catherine Creek was just loaded with salmon.

JG: Do you recall just roughly a period, you know, like the early '50s, for instance, or late '50s

BD: Yes, early '50s.

JG: ...how anything of any numbers and kind of year that they were in there?

BD: It was when... And I can't tell you the species, you know, but they would be in there early summer, June and July. And at Catherine Creek State Park you'd stand on the little bridge over it and you could see twenty or twenty-five salmon in the water swimming there. And, uh, I had a cute story about the old Davis Dam. Have you ever heard of the Davis Dam out here, you know?

JG: Oh yeah.

BD: My neighbor kid...and that would've been '51, '52, something like that, because the fourteen year old boy that was my next door neighbor and my kids were all little so I took him fishing and hunting with me. He and his buddy would ride out to Davis Dam and as the fish would try to jump over the dam they would miscue and they'd land on the bank. So these two boys would take their bicycles and they had baskets on 'em...and his name was Pat...and when the salmon would miscue they would dive on these salmon. And those two kids came home one day and I think they had about ten salmon. [laugh] Each one of 'em had four or five salmon. And they were, you know, fifteen to twenty pound salmon in these

baskets that they had hooked...rigged up on their bicycle. And, uh...now I don't... I'm not sure whether the Davis Dam was on Catherine Creek...

JG: Yeah, it's on Catherine. There's actually two dams. They put one in...and I don't know... Did you hear or know of anything roughly what dates those went in?

BD: No, I have no idea.

JG: It was way back in...oh, the original contract was like 1868 when they did that and channeled Catherine Creek. But those dams, you know, were sometime after that, of course.

BD: Right. No, and Davis' weren't particular. You could just drive in across their pastures right down... Everybody fished down in there. I never did go salmon fishing down there. It was... But I went down to the dam several times. But the Davis' were very lenient about people fishing and hunting all over their land. And I won't never forget Pat comin' home with those baskets full of salmon where they would not jump over, you know, they would land on the bank and those boys would dive on those salmon. And that would've been '51, '52, somewhere in there.

JG: Do you recall how far up the...or where you saw salmon up beyond the \_\_\_?

BD: I would see salmon clear up to the Catherine Creek meadows.

JG: North Catherine?

BD: Yeah, North Catherine. I never can remember seeing any salmon in South Catherine. 'Cause at that time South Catherine was closed, you couldn't fish South Catherine at all in the '50s.

C: Do you remember the picture we have of Kathy when she caught that one?

BD: Oh yeah, when we caught the steelhead there in...

C: At the park.

BD: Actually, we were on Little Catherine. We'd gone up the road on Little Catherine and she was sitting on a...sitting on a stone that was out in the water. She was about fourteen years old, one of our daughters. But I hiked Catherine Creek several times up to the Catherine Creek meadows and there was...on North Catherine and there'd be salmon up that far.

JG: Now you remember about how many and what date that would've been \_\_\_?

BD: Oh, let's see. Judy was seven. How... When was she born? I remember she...

JG: She was born in '48, November of '48.

BD: So seven years would have to...

C: '55.

BD: '55 is when I hiked in with her and I she got so tired I had to help pack her out and I know she was seven years old when we hiked into Catherine Creek meadows.

JG: Do you remember about how many fish were...that you \_\_\_?

BD: Oh, they were in pools, wherever there was a deep pool, and every...every quiet place and a pool, you know, and then there'd be a ripple and the a pool and so forth. And there'd be four or five salmon in every...in every pool, as I remember. And when we got up into the meadows and...I don't know whether you've ever fished Catherine Creek meadows, but...

JG: No, I never have been up to the meadow.

BD: ...it's lots of winding stuff and around under the tree roots, you know, and stuff. And there'd be salmon and I can't say, you know, whether there was four in a pool or ten, but there was a goodly amounts of... Catherine Creek was just...I thought was just an outstanding salmon fishery in that time, at that time.

JG: Do you recall anything as far as change, then, of when that started to change?

BD: No, I didn't pay any attention to that, but it just slacked off and slacked off. And, you know, my assumption is that it was the building of the dams on the Snake River.

JG: I know in the early '60s...I got back out of the army in '59...and I remember...I think '60, '61 right there there's still all kinds of 'em there at state park. They were still coming out at that time.

BD: I don't know when... I don't even know when the dams were built on the Snake.

JG: Yeah, there's... I can't recall. \_\_series\_\_ all the different dates.

BD: I do...and this is just my discussion with Spud Olsen because he was the...I had...he was in...I was in Rotary with him and we used to have lunch together. And I believe that there was a big controversy and that Idaho Power wanted to build stream flow generation, they didn't want the dams. But the Corps of Engineers they just do whatever they want to do and so they started building the high dams on the Snake. But as I remember in a discussion with Spud Olsen I suppose there in the '60s or whenever, you know, before the dams were built that... And I believe he was... I believe he worked for Idaho Power, I believe. And we were talking about whether... Because they wanted to build stream flow generation and not dam the river. And the Corps of Engineers do whatever they want to do. And I don't have any like at all for the Corps of Engineers and what they do. I think they're too... They don't have to answer to anybody, I don't think. But I believe it was the time then that the...that the dam started to be built. But, of course, the Grande Ronde dumps in below...below the high dam, so... but I don't know how many dams the fish have to go over before they get to the Grande Ronde.

JG: There's quite a few. They've got a lot of barriers to get through.

BD: A lot of barrier to go over, you know.

JG: 'Cause it starts way down \_\_ John Day...

BD: I remember when they were gonna dam...put a dam on Catherine Creek and Oregon was petitioning to put the dam on Catherine Creek and Washington was petitioning not to have the dam on. 'Cause I think most people...a lot of people here don't realize that...what is it, twenty-eight miles of the Grande Ronde River is in the state of Washington?

JG: Yeah.

BD: And Washington wanted to keep that because it was such good steelhead fishing. At that time that lower Grande Ronde from...basically from Ron Dow on down to the end of that. And Washington advertised and promoted their recreational steelhead fishing. And Oregon wanted to put a dam...I think so that they dammed all that meadows there were the...

JG: The whole Hall ranch.

BD: Yeah, you know, all that. And then dam the Grande Ronde, too. Oregon was...had the pressures and petitioning to dam the creeks, the streams and

Washington was petitioning and requesting that they not be dammed so it didn't interfere with the steelhead.

JG: You know the Grande Ronde and where they proposed that one?

BD: Tony Bay meadows, as far as I know.

JG: Oh. Okay. 'Cause I never did see anything on...

BD: That was what we always heard that the...where the...that narrow...where the canyon...

JG: The rock wall...

BD: Rock wall \_\_ expands out into Bay Meadows. That's where the dam was gonna go. And this was in great... I felt very opposed to this because my dad was...spent a lifetime on the water resources systems in Yakima and he was on the state boards and whatever with regard to irrigation. And the rules up there always was that you put the dam as...up high. You went up into the high...high waters, not down into the low. And that's the big controversy of the Rosa Dam on the Yakima River there just above Yakima. Because that Rosa Dam, which produces the Rosa Canal which irrigates a tremendous amount of eastern Washington. My dad and all the people on the water board were very opposed to that. But again the Engineers put 'em in wherever they wanted to. And it was always called the Rosa project. But his rule and all the rule...all of the people in the water irrigation systems up in Yakima was get the dams up high. And I thought if there was gonna be a dam on Catherine Creek the very lowest it ought to be was up on Catherine Creek meadows on North Catherine, not down at the Hall ranch there. The same way with the Grande Ronde, that it should be high up on the mountain, not down at Tony...at the Bay meadows. And, you know, we had discussions and we had meetings and all kinds of stuff. I never did feel that the river should be dammed at these low levels to...I don't know for what even reason, flood control or something, I suppose. But...

JG: Bill, do you recall anything...other than salmon population areas like Indian Creek or up the Grande Ronde...?

BD: I never have been in Indian Creek. I would... I would... After... See, there was no salmon in the upper Grande Ronde. And I don't remember ever going for steelhead up there until later on. But after Homer found the reds up there then... And I don't know whether anybody ever fished the upper Grande Ronde for salmon at all. The only place I ever used to see the Indians was on Catherine Creek and they would come in and camp above the campground there in that area that is just above the upper campground. And there would be Indians fishing and I did find some Indians fishing up on the upper Grande Ronde. Found Indians...really zapped a bunch of Indians in on Five Points Creek one day. They really hauled out of there in a hurry. There was four guys and they had a net that they would put across Five Points Creek. I went up there to fish, trout fish. And they were using explosives. There was steelhead in there on Five Points Creek and I'd hear this "boom" and then I couldn't figure out what it was. And I walked down there and they had a net that they would put across the creek...it was kind of fast flowing...and they'd throw in their explosives and then the fish that were stung would float down to their net. And man, when I came down there they

hauled that thing out of there and they were out of there in two minutes. There was four Indian guys.

JG: Do you remember other places up the Grande Ronde where they were fishing?

BD: I would see them... I would see the Indians eventually fishing, um... And they were spearing... They were spear fishing. Both on Catherine Creek and on... The ones that I saw oftentimes were spear fishing. 'Cause they would...with polarized glasses they could see in the water and the salmon would be like under a bank or something, you know. I think along...I can't remember in the Grande Ronde above Meadowbrook. And I can't tell you whether they were in... I think maybe along close to where Red Bridge Park is, some of the stretches there.

JG: But all that was on the Grande Ronde River?

BD: That was all the Grande Ronde River. I don't remember ever seeing anybody up on Meadowbrook or... And then, of course, Beaver Creek was always closed off. That was always gated off. So we would go on to Beaver Creek up across the old highway that went up to...the old highway to Vay meadows. Ladd Canyon was closed at that time. There was no road or anything, no public access into Ladd Creek at all, in my early years. I think the Bezing...no, it wasn't the Bezing brothers. Can't think of the guys that owned Ladd Creek that sold that to Boise Cascade. I know when they sold to Boise Cascade they figured that it was gonna be twenty years that had been so damaged and so overgrazed and there was so much problem on that they figured it would be twenty years before there would ever be any grazing. And it came back really, really fast. I think Boise Cascade...and I'm assuming that they put...that they let cattle graze on that land now.

JG: I'm not real sure.

BD: 'Cause I see cattle all over...all over Ladd Creek.

JG: \_\_\_ something in there, but I haven't been up there.

BD: And I don't know who... I don't know what Boise Cascade owns up there, you'd have to look at a map. But I remember that it was six or eight years and there were being cattle allotments put in Ladd Creek. But I know when it was...when they sold that and opened up Ladd Creek that they figured it'd be twenty years before... It was so damaged that... Look how I'm gettin' to ramblin' here, Jerry. But I belong to the Isaac Walton League and I was really active in it for years and years. And we had a speaker coming from Baker one night and he was late. And they said, why...you know, he said, "I'm sorry that I'm late." And at that time it was just a two-lane road up the canyon. He said there was a whole mass of cattle in the middle of the road and he said, "I couldn't get through 'em. At the mouth of that creek up there." And they said, "Oh, that's Ladd Creek." And they said...some guy asked him, he said, "Did you happen to see a big white-faced cow with a crumpled horn?" And he said, "Well, yes I did!" He said, "I remember seeing that big...great big black...white-face with a crumpled horn." And he said, "I figured so." He says, "That's the one that learned to pick the lock so that they could get out of Catherine Creek and get some food." [laughs]

JG: Was that strictly \_\_\_ overgrazing as far as recovery, or were there other things that \_\_\_?

BD: I think that... I don't think that there'd been logging at all, to my knowledge. It was just pure... They would just... The rule was that if a cow came off fat...grass fat, as they termed it...the land was alright. But when people went in there, I mean, those cows...cattle were eating brush down to the... Everything was stripped bare. Every bush, every...everything. They just put a massive amount... When that was owned by the...

JG: Remember about what year that would be when that...?

BD: Oh, let's see. I think that that would've been probably the early 1960s.

JG: Now Boise didn't get here until...I think it was '60 when they bought out Val Set, someplace in there.

BD: Yeah. I think shortly after that's when they bought that big bunch of land from those...

JG: 'Cause Mt. Emily was bought out by Val Sets in '55 and then...

BD: Right.

JG: I think I was in the army about the time that...

BD: And then Boise bought...

JG: ...Boise came '59, '60, something like that.

BD: ...from Val Sets in '60?

JG: It would've been right in there.

BD: Yeah. It would've been the early years of the '60s.

JG: Boise was here, I know, when I got out in '59 \_\_.

BD: I think that Ladd Creek area was opened up and was one of the very earliest purchases by Boise Cascade, I believe. I mean they could tell ya, I'm sure, when it was purchased. But there was two... The Bezing brothers owned this side of the mountain all up on Rock Creek and...not Rock Creek, but Sheep Creek and the flats here. And the other pair of brothers owned that Ladd Creek. And I can't tell ya what their names were. I don't remember 'em. I was not looking, you know, at what was happening or whether the land looked good or whether it looked eroded. Nobody was paying any attention to that kind of stuff, Jerry, in the '60s and '70s.

JG: Oh no. That's pretty common.

BD: You know, I thought when I would hike Mud Spring Flats and around to the head of Grizzley and so forth over there, Grizzly Goats, and I was just appalled at the huge channels that were cut in the mountains up there. And it wasn't... And, in fact, the contouring and the...and that I think was done after that was made into a Wilderness Area. I think that they were...

JG: That was all Wilderness\_\_.

BD: I think they were not supposed to go in there with that mechanized stuff, but it was...

JG: That didn't... Mechanized didn't really catch up till probably the late '60s and then used to fight fire, yeah. You take chain saws in and all that.

BD: Right.

JG: Then it was after that when that got closed \_\_.

BD: So... I \_\_ just be appalled at the huge trenches that were cut in that hillside. I...you know, I don't know why...except for the dams I don't know why else the salmon run would be so lost in especially Catherine Creek. Because it was... It



was just a heavy, heavy... Salmon everywhere in that. I don't know anything about their spawning habits in the Grande Ronde except that after...as the years went by then... Homer left here in '56 'cause the Sleighbaughs bought that house there in '56, so it would've been '54, '55 maybe that he found the salmon reds up there. And that's when he found the big bundle of wire at the mouth of Catherine Creek to block the salmon from going up Catherine Creek.

JG: Was that right at the mouth of Catherine?

BD: It was right... He said... He said... His statement was that they had dumped a great big rolls of what we call hog wire, which is the...

JG: Yeah, the little square, rectangular.

BD: ...squares, massive rolls of this in the creek right at the mouth of Ladd Creek...or of Catherine Creek, he said.

JG: Did he say why or who?

BD: No idea.

JG: Any \_\_ of what was \_\_

BD: No, I have no idea. I know that the Fish and Wildlife immediately went in and hauled the wire out so that the...as soon as he found it so that the salmon could go up the creek. But that's when... And it always was so interesting to me that the salmon would have to back track all the way down back down the Grande Ronde...or the Grande Ronde slough, as we called it, to where they could come back up the Grande Ronde River then.

JG: Yeah. See, that's the...the mouth of Catherine Creek that is the old Grande Ronde channel.

BD: Oh sure!

JG: The state ditch cut, you know, cut that part off.

BD: Right.

JG: At that time do you know if that was still running any water between there? 'Cause right now it's been abandoned, you know, its all gone into farm ground in between.

BD: Yeah. As you... What was part of the old Grande Ronde as you crossed the highway going to Cove they call Catherine Creek now.

JG: Right.

BD: And we still called all that the Grande Ronde slough, all the way from there clear down in through past Gray's corner and down toward Elmer's place and so forth. You know, we always called that the Grande Ronde slough and I do not know where the main Grande Ronde channel, where those two separate. I don't know.

JG: See, the... I can draw ya a quick map on that, I think.

BD: That's okay, you know.

JG: You come, you know, like out of La Grande here, you're goin' out towards Island City, you're goin' due east. It goes clear out and hits right into where the state ditch takes off. And that...when they cut off that state ditch which went, you know, kind of north and east and then north, right from there the old Grande Ronde channel of the south slough, or they call Spring Creek slough, that came in right in there and that's like the south fork of the Grande Ronde. They came together right there by the state ditch. But then the main channel went on down and it's probably about, oh, six, seven miles of where came in there junctioned

with Catherine Creek. Then that's where it turned north towards Mt. Harris and Gray's Corner and then came back around towards Imbler's. So if they had a... Like right there if they were block there instead of havin' to backtrack they would've gone right straight up that channel, assuming that was still open at that time.

BD: No, this is... Catherine Creek for us dumped in over on Connley's land.

JG: Yeah, right. But I meant right there at the mouth, Bill, would be at that point if that channel would...I'm talkin' about Grande Ronde...if that was still open they could've come right up from that point there. But now that's all closed. That's all been abandoned since then.

BD: I don't really know. All I... All Homer said was the wire was dumped at the mouth of Catherine Creek and I'd assumed it was over on...this direction.

JG: I was lookin' at it like the old photos there in 1937 was the first aerial flight \_\_\_ and it was...that was connected at that time and I was tryin' to think probably into the '50s...it looked like that might have still been open in there. \_\_\_

BD: There were lots and lots of contours and channels all over the property that Weishar has that he's graded in, where Willy Hamann was, that all...that was all still massive amounts of channels around in there in the '50s and '60s.

JG: Do you recall along those lines of how far the cottonwood came out like from La Grande here going out that direction down along the river?

BD: There was lots of it. On Taylor's property, on the property that Weishar have. And Chris and I have commented about it so many times as you went to Cove you would just see massive amounts of cottonwood and streamside brush, you know, in there. And I don't know who owns all the land. I know Delashmet owned a bunch of it and Taylor and...

JG: Where was Taylor in relationship, do you recall, from Willy Hamann and \_\_\_

BD: He was on the right-hand side of the road and I can't tell ya what road... I don't think it's where Peach comes in. Maybe Peach.

JG: Pierce Lane is your first one that goes...that's where the trailer...

BD: Right. No, it wasn't Pierce.

JG: And then Peach is the main next...main one beyond that.

BD: I think he was on Peach on the left-hand side of it, I believe. And I don't know who else owned stuff out there. I think Weishars have a lot of that now. There was a Connley...

JG: Connley used to own a lot. He still has \_\_\_

BD: There was a different... There was another cousin Connley that... And I believe he's the...either the first...he's the first house on the right-hand side after you get back this way where you turn the corner and then start down off of the Sandridge. Where that...oh, the...the guy that lives there at the corner where you turn is the druggist at Safeway. And there's kind of a tall house on the right-hand side. There isn't much houses on the right-hand side once you get past the Delashmot's. There's only...

JG: Agricultural.

BD: ...one that I can think of and then...then this was this Connley and he was a cousin. It's where the big barn is tumbling and breaking down.

JG: Right. But there's a lot of, you know, in between Cove and back on the Sandridge real heavily to the willows, you know, along the creek and I didn't know if...

BD: That's... That's the Connley land, isn't it?

JG: Yeah.

BD: Yeah.

JG: But, I mean, that whole stretch of river, you know, through there.

BD: Right.

JG: And then...\_\_ Bill Holly said like towards Imbler there's...right off from coming down off Mt. Harris there at Grey's Corner there's few patches in there of cottonwood. And I didn't know on...like when you're going out of Island City about how far that cottonwood went out before, in a sense, changed to willow in there, if you recall.

BD: There were tall...just like you'd see on Wilkerson Lane, big long stretches of cottonwood, you know, there across from...as I turn down Wilkerson and then turn to go over in front of...of...what's the name of the road? But anyway, there's the big long channels with the cottonwoods in 'em. And those, it seemed to me, were just as you would...as we would go toward Cove, why, there'd be just channel after channel of that with those big long things of cottonwood and they were all taken down. And I think over toward...gosh, the names of people are escaping me...

JG: Do you remember, though, when...about when that would've been changed up?

BD: I think in the '60s.

JG: In '60s?

BD: Yeah. I think that those...that those were certainly into the '70s, but the '60s and the '70s was when I think most of this...and the same way going to Imbler or on the Mt. Glen road. They were along that creek coming down the hill off of Mt. Glen was just a solid mass of cottonwoods. And Willow Creek was totally wiped out of all of the brush and the willows. And that was a solid...you couldn't even see Willow Creek.

JG: Do you know if that was the land owners that did that, or...?

BD: Yes, I'm sure Willow Creek was. Because...that's why it was called it. When we would cross it you couldn't...it was solid willows all the way from the Grande Ronde as far as you could see up the canyon there. I think the...and I'm not...I'm not a bit critical of the agricultural people doing this because they wanted to farm their land, but to me one of the major changes in this valley had been the change in the...in the...eliminating the old river bed, for one thing, because all those contours on Weishar's land and whoever's across the highway from him had been totally obliterated. Total...the trees, cottonwood, the willow trees and everything have been just totally eliminated out of the whole valley. I...almost fifty years here that's one of the major changes that I've seen. I saw when Catherine Creek was rechanneled. When it used to go...and I don't know what...I would guess that was in the '50s, late '50s or '60s. I don't know whether you remember when Catherine Creek was totally rechanneled and made into a ditch almost down through below the park down toward the corner.

JG: Are you talking about up at the State Park?

BD: Below that across that farm land that used to big, big contours and there a lot of salmon places \_\_\_.

JG: But you're talkin' about like above Union?

BD: Above Union, right.

JG: Oh, okay. Between the State Park...

BD: Between the State Park and Union.

JG: ...and on down. I remember the, oh, when Leonard Huffman... I remember him working in there on that property which was quite a ways up, you know, just about the place where you get into the canyon. And then...I didn't remember, or that might've been before I was here of when that other...

BD: I used to drive down a little road and park and fish Catherine Creek about across from where they started building the houses up on the hillside.

JG: Right.

BD: And there were big contours and big pools and stuff and a year or two later it was just a straight channel run. I think they just dozed the whole thing out and straightened it out and made a ditch almost.

JG: 'Cause all that now it pushed over against the mountain, I mean, you know, the channel itself is right the edge of that \_\_\_ kind of south there.

BD: Right.

JG: Edge of the...

BD: And that really changed a tremendous amount of the creek. All the pools and everything were gone then.

JG: Do your remember who was doing that 'cause I...?

BD: I have no idea.

JG: Oh, okay. 'Cause the... See, Soil Conservation District of, you know, Union County they started in '48 and \_\_\_ by Jones that's when they got the heavy equipment, of course, as a surplus and they were going through, you know, and that's where a lot of that got changed. Before they were clearin' the brush and then leveling and...

BD: Right. And I think... I think they did work on Catherine Creek then off of Wilkerson on down around...and I don't know what direction it's going, whether it's going north or going west, but a lot of that... I think that dyke was practically remodeled at that time, too, the Catherine Creek dyke. 'Cause the remnants of the old dyke are down in there on the...on that stuff that Sherman Hawkins owns.

JG: On the Sherman Hawkins area there.

BD: But then there's the new dyke and I remember they were building that new dyke about that time, too. I think... I think the major part of that new dyke has been built since we've been here. Then that was really channeled out. And of course you certainly have the story of two or three years ago with the Corps of Engineers coming in and cleaning out Ladd Creek and then down Catherine Creek, destroying all the cottonwood trees illegally. They came within just, oh, a hundred yards of taking down the cottonwoods that the great blue heron nest in.

JG: I knew that that heron\_\_ got in there, yeah.

BD: It was almost taken down. My understanding, and it's just, you know, rumor type of thing, was that the contract and the agreement...because we had lots of hearings on it ahead of time...was that the Corps of Engineer was not to take

anything except the roots and the stuff that was in the creek. And the land owners out there, and I don't know who it was besides Sherman, said, we never have liked these cottonwood out there and we've never liked 'em over here and they were takin' down a cottonwood a hundred yards from the creek. And Mark Hensham went out and just really jumped on 'em and said, Hey, you know, you're contract says only in the creek. You're takin' down this. And they were taking down toward the rookery and they were just within a hundred yards of the heron rookery. And Sherman Hawkins afterwards...and he was my patient...and he was just screaming. He hated the Fish and still does. Hates the Fish and Wildlife Service. Sherman's statement to me was, "Why don't the Fish and Wildlife butt out and let us farmers do what we want to with our own land." That was Sherman's policies...philosophy. He was... He's so... He won't let us even do our Christmas bird count on his land. He is totally against everything that has anything to do with wildlife or ecology or birds or anything. I have to tell you one of my funnies. My son and I...that little patch of land of the corner of Sherman's there as you go down Wilkerson on the right-hand side and below Catherine floods out there and there's a lot of wetland there. And we would see geese in there. And so I went to Sherman and I...said... 'cause I'd known him ever...for ever since we came here...and I said, "Could my son and I put a little blind out there and hunt geese on that wetland?" And he said, "Oh, no, no, no!" He said, "I don't have any wetland here!" [laughs] He said, "That's not wetland!" Then he said, "No," he says, "you can't hunt in there." He said, "That's not wetland." Gosh, water was...stood...

JG: Oh, I know. I got pictures of how all that water fed in there.

BD: Two feet deep there, you know, nine months out of the year.

JG: A few years...a couple of years ago I was over there, yeah.

BD: Marshy in-between, you know. He immediately said, "No, no, no." He said, "There's no wetland here."

JG: \_\_\_\_\_

BD: 'Cause anytime anything's declared as a wetland, why, then there's a whole different rules on how you manage it. But it was so funny he was just so quick to say, "No no. There's no wetland." I wish I could...I had more specific things too, you know, because I wasn't paying any attention to these kind of things, Jerry. I just...

JG: There's so much, of course, that's gone on that...you're passin' every day...[end tape]

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BD: ...rainbow, yeah, right. They wouldn't... The...the... To me the native little rainbow that we got here...and I've caught a lot of them out of Five Points Creek and Little Minam Creek and all these there...they would get to be a real dark little rainbow. A big one would be ten inches. And upper Catherine, we would hike up to the upper...upper Catherine Creek meadows. I always regretted not fishing South Fork because it looked like such a minimal little stream and when they

opened it that year they just caught magnificent trout out of that South Fork for one year. I just thought it was just a minimal little stream and I was catching good fishing on the... I don't think they were doing any planting of fish at all on that Catherine Creek from the park clear up to Catherine Creek Meadows. I don't think...it was just native trout. It'd be... Once in a while you'd catch one a foot long, but most of it was nine, ten...ten inches.

JG: Do you recall anything about beaver activity, Bill, a change, or...?

BD: Actually, the last few years I've seen more beaver than...than I did early on. There's always been a beaver dam in there on Ladd Creek on the...on the...or there was and I don't know whether they trapped that beaver out or not. We were... My son and I were fishing Catherine Creek one day probably it would've been below the park maybe in some of this area I was talking about. There was a big pool, kind of quiet waters...he was a high school kid and his back was turned and I could see this beaver swimmin' toward him. And he was very quiet. And this beaver got right up and it was within two feet of him. He moved a little bit and all of a sudden that beaver slapped the water and just splashed water all over him. But we would see beaver just almost any place we went or beaver activity. Catherine Creek and the Grande...along the Grande Ronde River and every place we would go.

JG: No do you see any change of that activity or \_\_\_?

BD: It's just that maybe I'm just more observing it more. 'Cause I say it seemed like that there's more beaver activity now that I see than I did, you know, thirty years ago. And I don't know whether that's true or not, you know, but most places I go... This new area that they call the Bird Track Springs area up on the Grande Ronde.

JG: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm.

BD: On the right-hand side.

JG: Kind of along Wayne Meadows area right in there. The big meadow area just above there where all the cottonwoods are?

BD: Right. And the cottonwoods there above the rifle range and all of it.

JG: Right.

BD: And we just...we just got through putting up twenty-five bird boxes in there and there's just beaver activity every place in there.

JG: Yeah, I noticed there's a lot in there.

BD: I think there's some good...several pretty good-lookin' beaver lodges in there on some of that wetland area.

JG: Yeah.

BD: And, uh...

JG: I know Five Points Creek, too, there's a lot of activity \_\_\_ list last year or two years.

BD: Yeah. And I don't know whether that's good or bad, whether they want the beaver in there or not.

C: What about the ones that are coming in on Timberman...\_\_\_?

BD: Yeah. You've heard of Timberman Williamson?

JG: Yeah, McCoy Creek.

BD: McCoy Creek area. And they're trying to do to attract beaver in there.

JG: Yeah, right. They're tryin' to put that whole through this last year...

BD: Reestablish that into their old...

JG: ...put the old channel back in.

BD: ...old channel back, yeah. I don't know whether Catherine Creek on that farm...those land...I can't see the farmers ever wanting to have the old contours back on Catherine Creek there from Union up to the park. I can't... I don't know of the area that's on the... I suppose it's state land that's above the park on the Hall ranch there.

JG: Yeah, that's all the Oregon State Research.

BD: And I don't know whether that's ever been channeled and changed or not.

JG: Not that I'm aware of. I don't... I'm not aware that that ever was. Of course, there's some big trees right in the...you know, in the creek itself and right at the edge of it, so \_\_\_\_.

BD: That was always... I used to like to stop there and walk in there and fly fish that in the evening. Most of my outdoor activities has been either camping or fishing or hunting. And that's when I would see and do things, you know.

JG: Bill Brown said that...I guess, you know, they had the state park or they reworked that out there up Catherine Creek. To keep away from flooding problems that they went up and channeled from Hall ranch down the creek. Do you remember that at all, Bill?

BD: No, I don't remember that.

JG: Okay. 'Cause he... He couldn't remember the dates. He just was real emphasized on \_\_\_\_.

BD: I know we used to have flooding because one time our second daughter was probably four-and-a-half, five years old. So it would've been thirty-five years ago at least. It was '37. There was a huge... The flooding in the spring had brought down a huge mass of stuff. I mean there was a piles of driftwood and stuff as tall as this ceiling there. And I was fishing and starting down and I heard it for ten seconds and I turned around and she was just like a little bird dog on point and she was looking and looking and looking at that like in this...where this trash and all these limbs was. And I'd heard a rattlesnake rattle. And I hollered at her, said, "Kathy," I said, "stand still, stand still." And I rushed up to where she was and I said, "What was it?" And she couldn't tell me except there was something right there. And I looked and looked in the driftwood and in the brush to see if I could see the snake. But I heard it. I was fishing, oh, about from here to the edge of the lawn away from her and I heard this "brrr" for a second and I saw her just standing and looking and looking down in the...in the brush and the trash that had come down. And there was huge pile of stuff in there.

JG: Do you remember, Bob, with her age about when that would've been? What year?

BD: How old would she been...?

JG: She was born in '51.

BD: So this would've been about...she was...about... I would say about '56 probably 'cause she was about five years old.

C: We had Nancy and we had Richard.

BD: Yeah. Nancy... They were babies, but Kathy would string along with me, walk along the banks and things, you know, when I was fishing. And she was walking along this huge pile of driftwood and brush that had come down in the spring flood.

C: When she caught that...what was it?

BD: She was the one that caught the steelhead up there.

C: Steelhead. She was wearing a brief halter top and shorts and there was some fellas fishing below her. And here she holds this big... [laughs]

BD: She was sitting out on this stone with this fish running up and down and up and down.

C: It was a real sensation!

BD: She was my outdoor girl. She would go pheasant hunting with me and fishing and stuff. She'd in Montana now. Fishing and huntin' over there.

JG: Do you recall anything on the mining activity up the Grande Ronde since you've been here?

BD: Not as such, no. I've heard of any...of anybody...

JG: If you went back in on that Camp Carson tried to work it it was mostly, you know, into a bankruptcy kind of thing. I don't think they did\_\_

BD: I never have heard a thing about... I've wondered about the...

JG: They just pushing things around, you know, \_\_.

BD: ...the mining stuff up in there.

JG: But most that, of course, was down...well, the dredge was back in 1940, '39 and '40s when that was dredged.

BD: I think the dredge was still running up at Sumpter when we came here for quite a while.

JG: Yeah. But \_\_ up the upper Grande Ronde, that area\_\_.

BD: The upper Grande Ronde. I don't... I never saw anybody or remember anything at all about any... I have had an argument with the Forest Service because it looks to me like that there's dredge tailings in on this area of Bird Track Springs. There's two, three great big long channels of gravel thrown up. And I... Looks like dredge tailings in there on that wetland along the river there.

JG: Bill, would there... 'Cause I know... See, the old railroad, logging railroad, went through there. If that might've come... 'Cause I noticed some of that rock that was in there it...when they put that roadbed in if that might've been where that would originate from or not?

BD: No. That wouldn't 've been where the railroad was.

JG: Oh, okay. 'Cause railroad's right in close to the road...

BD: That's right.

JG: Right at...at the...at the park there.

BD: Right.

C: Those mounds, who were we talking with the other night and they said that they...

BD: She didn't...they...

C: ...the leftover...

BD: She thought that the woman that I was talking to is the one that was helping develop that and she thought the highway department dumped that gravel there



way back when, that they used that as a gravel dumping ground. But where it is...and I don't think she knows what I'm even talking about...because it's wetland in there and it would've been a hard way for... There's great big stream beds and then wet...

JG: There's a lot of swampy area, yeah.

BD: ...marsh and swampy in there. Then these huge big piles of gravel are beyond it and I can't...I can't see the highway department dumping gravel in there right at the...almost to the edge of the river and through that marshy wetland. Looks to me like that it's tailings from a...from a dredge, but she thinks it's the...where highway department dumped gravel. I don't know because...

JG: Yeah, 'cause the only record I could dig out on the actually dredge work was the '39, '40 on the Grande Ronde and Tanner Gulch. It was about two...roughly two miles of stream beds that they took out, turned upside down

BD: I didn't realize it was that late in the...in the...

JG: I always, you know, just assumed that was way back here in century when they're doin' the hydraulic \_\_ and then I went up to Baker at the files and dug into those and it was the Ora\_\_ Company that got in there in '38...or '39 when they started.

BD: Is that right?

JG: '39 and '40.

BD: Is that right?

JG: And then the... See, the Fisheries Department they did a survey in there and they're mentioning, you know, some of that at that time. That was 1940, I think, '41 that they were in there.

BD: It was more recent than I thought it would've been, you know. 'Cause I would've assumed... I had assumed that...that...I don't know how long ago dredges were invented and when they started using the big dredges.

JG: This was more of a... From what I've read about was a track mounted...more like a steam shovel type where they had plantoon...or pontoon washer and they were just scooping...you know, goin' down the river, I guess, scoopin' that stuff up and dumpin' it. I could never find any pictures of it, but just by the description of it.

BD: That would certainly fit the thing on the Bird Track Springs 'cause it's right along the edge of the river almost.

JG: 'Cause they brought that over from Granite is where that originally was...

BD: Oh, I see.

JG: ...and then they built a road over the hill and brought it into the upper Grande Ronde.

BD: Oh yeah. But the...'cause the piles are long. I mean the ones there on Bird Track Springs on the upper Grande Ronde wind around there for several hundred yards and then there's another one for a hundred yards.

JG: I'll be darned. 'Cause I didn't see those. I was... I walked part of that and I haven't' been, you know,...

BD: You gotta go... Where you park there right where you enter into Bird Track Springs campground and you go right straight follow that gravel road there, the old gravel road right straight back and then swing a little bit to the right.

JG: Oh, okay.

BD: Then you'll get in there where it's real marshy and wet and big channels and you'll actually climb right up on the top of this big long ridge that's along the back side.

JG: I apparently just by-passed that 'cause I walked part of that.

BD: If you turn to the left than you'll get on up above this, but it's in the...it's in the right-hand right...actually almost the boundary of the property is that big long ridge there and then one up along the river. I think they must a quarter of a mile long totally, maybe.

JG: Be interesting to try and run that one down.

BD: Right.

JG: Do you recall anything about the splash stands back up the upper Grande Ronde? This, of course, would've been tied in when they were floating logs down the river.

BD: Yeah. No, I don't. This Horton Andrews that worked at the Perry mill was telling me...he worked at Perry mill and he was talkin' about the...

JG: Oh, was he?

BD: Yeah. He has a lot of information about Perry and the dam and the log...when they'd float the logs down and the lumberjacks'd ride the logs and so forth. He's really a historian on that thing because he worked there. I think he started workin' when he was just a kid.

JG: He'd be a good source then.

BD: Maybe fourteen, fifteen years old. And I talked... I visited a little with him and he was telling me about the mill at Perry and he worked there and then he transferred down to the so-called Mt. Emily mill and then Valsets and then when Boise Cascade took over, why, he was one of the foreman and they started making production quotas and he had a lot of these old guys workin' there and he said, "I'm not gonna fire old George and so forth. He's the one that taught me this and that." They fired him because he wouldn't...he wouldn't conform to the programs and the... I think it was Boise Cascade, although it could've been it was Valsets that they fired him. Anyway, they fired him. Said you either got to work the way we tell ya to work or you're not workin' here anymore. But he said, "I could not fire those old guys that had been there a long time." But Horton... If you want any information about the mill and the logs and floating and on and on, why, Horton would sure be a good resource.

JG: Oh great.

BD: When we came here the railroad was still workin'. The husband of my early office assistant helped take the ties and stuff out when they took the railroad out.

JG: 'Cause it was just... I remember the locomotives would park there by Hilgard, if I remember right, or right in to maybe Perry. '55's when I got out here.

BD: Yeah. I came here in '50 and they were still haulin' the timber down with the railroad in '50. I used to fish off the railroad bridge where it crossed Meadowbrook up there.

JG: Do you recall, Bill, of what year when they put the interstate in between La Grande and\_\_, you know, as you go on out of town here right where the old bridge...the Oradell Bridge was clear up to Hilgard?

BD: What year that was?

JG: Yeah.  
BD: Gee, I just don't know.  
JG: I think it was 1960 from what I can gather, but...  
BD: Yeah. Now, this, you mean, when they built the freeway?  
JG: Yeah, when they actually built the freeway.  
BD: Built the freeway.  
JG: Which would've been, of course, starting to...right at the Or...well, that bridge, that steel bridge, right out of town here was called the Oradell Bridge.  
BD: Right.  
JG: From there up to Hilgard they went in and I think there's just through that one year period they went through, of course, changed...  
BD: Rechanneled the whole...the whole river.  
JG: Yeah.  
BD: Right.  
JG: Yeah, took out parts of the river, of course, and changed all the bridges, you know, and...  
BD: They moved the river...moved the highway from the left side of the river to over to the right side part of the way.  
JG: Do you recall...  
BD: ...river...rechannel it.  
JG: ...like what they were doing as far as the vegetation there and the movement of the river and those things changed in there at all?  
BD: Not really. It was just, you know...it was just getting done and I don't remember any discussion about whether it was good or bad or whether this is gonna affect anything or not, you know.  
JG: The only thing...well, Bob Sayer who's worked, you know, in Fish and Wildlife...  
BD: Oh yeah, I remember him.  
JG: ...fish biologist.  
BD: Right.  
JG: He got 'em to put some big boulders in there. That was about all that came out of it as far as, you know, a benefit, you know, of when they got some change...  
BD: No, I don't...  
JG: Just workin' it over aerial photographs I've mapped all that out and \_\_ that change was, but I haven't been able to find any pictures, you know, while they're actually working in there.  
BD: Right. I just don't have hardly any recollection of it at all. There's a big bend in the river that I...I walk my dog in the mornings up on the old Perry...road above Perry and there's a big bend in the river there was abandoned and highway and the railroad was moved clear on the other side of it.  
JG: Do you recall like the meadow areas up the Grande Ronde of changes in any of that? It'd be like Bay Meadows, Fly Creek and McCoy Meadow Creek.  
BD: Yeah. Right. I really don't know except of watching Tipperman Williamson, you know, change theirs, but as far as...as Fly Creek I used to...used to elk hunt. I could go up Fly Creek and come out way up above the upper Grande Ronde and then come back through Gray Meadows. We could drive through the whole

thing. That's totally blocked off now. But then I could go up on Fly Ridge and hunt deer and elk and grouse. I don't think I can go up on Fly... I haven't tried to go up on Fly Ridge at all for a long time. But I just really don't know anything much about that area up there. They were... Vay Meadows were...they were runnin' a lot of cattle on it and it was sort of off limits to everything at that time.

JG: McCoy's the only one I know, of course, they \_\_channel that \_\_ there after the floods of '64.

BD: Yeah.

JG: But I didn't see any sign just lookin' at aerial photos where that, you know, the river's moved all over the place in past years, but as far as any where the...you know, somebody's gone down and actually channeled it I couldn't find any evidence.

BD: I can't remember any modification or change or channeling or anything on that upper part up there. The river meanders back and forth across Vay Meadows.

JG: Right, yeah.

BD: And then, uh, where Fly Creek comes in was a really steep canyon, at least on the lower part where we would go through. We would take an old logging road and part of the time I actually have to drive in the creek and then we could circle clear around and elk hunt through there. The...I was trying to think... I don't know whether there's been a change in the Grande Ronde from where it...you leave it where you turn off to go into the Starkey store.

JG: Oh yeah.

BD: Because you actually go over onto Meadowbrook then above that. And I don't know whether there's been change in that meadow since... Because that was called River Camp, you know, that whole area there above...on the right-hand side above Starkey store was just a mass of cabins and stuff in there before. And whether Chachez has done anything different in that meadows there or not since the...the... All of the cabins were taken...taken down except the Taal...t-a-a-l...cabin. And I can't remember...why, names are escaping me Jerry. The guy that owned all that lived down here on the right-hand side across from Bohnenkamp's house. That was his house. And I can't tell you what his name was. And my understanding was that it was on a lease basis because as soon as the...as soon as the, uh, abandoned the main camp over on Meadowbrook and the River Camp over on the Grande Ronde everything was taken down. And the Taal, t-a-a-l, family kept a cabin back up next to the hill almost where Fly Creek comes in. That was the only cabin that was left. And I can't tell you what years that was. But when they abandoned that whole program of having River Camp and Main Camp up there...

JG: Yeah, once the railroads when out, you know...

BD: Railroad went out and the whole thing was abandoned. And the Baptist church bought the old...started their Elkanah Camp, which was part of the old main headquarters for the...for the main camp there.

JG: That was the headquarters camp, wasn't it?

BD: Yeah, it was headquarters camp, right. I knew a lot of people that worked there and lived up there. I'm assuming those people in their cabins below Elkanah have purchased them, you know, as private property.

JG: That's quite a community up there.

BD: Yeah, but whether...whether Chachez and those people in there on that river...meadows there has changed anything or not, I don't know.

JG: I flew it this last year, last summer, and it doesn't...you know, again, it looks like probably between ice flows and beaver dams and all that stuff moves back and forth, but I haven't seen any evidence of, you know, goin' down and actually tryin' to channel the area. What about from Oradell coming down through La Grande as far as changes in the river ever since you've been here?

BD: There certainly have been some changes and they have changed the...and done something just below Oradell there to put it out into that ditch. And I don't know, you know, except it just seems to me like that the...from Oradell clear to Island City has been tremendously changed and I think that R. D. Mack's gravel project has done as much about the change as anything. There's been a lot, a lot of the land owners have really complained about his total...totally illegal gravel thing because of the... My understanding is...and I don't know, I mean it's just rumors that he wasn't supposed to go but like fifteen feet deep or something and he went like thirty-five feet deep or something. And that the biggest change in that...in the lower part there toward Island City was from the gravel...that gravel business.

JG: 'Cause you got that and Shoebert is the other side of the bridge down below Island City.

BD: Shoebert didn't start that until...

JG: That's been pretty recent.

BD: Pretty recently, right. I'm not sure whether he's even in business down there anymore.

JG: I think it's still in operation though I might be wrong.

BD: 'Cause I think he... I think he's moved away from here, at least Duane has, I think, because they sold...

JG: I knew they sold Anthony Lakes.

BD: ...Anthony Lake and I don't think Duane's livin' here anymore.

JG: Oh, I see.

BD: I don't think. Now, I don't know.

JG: But I talked to Art Clark who worked there at Boise Cascade and he said like in the early '50s they were taking gravel or had a plant right there off either Third or Fourth Street right out in the river.

BD: Yeah.

JG: Do you recall anything about...?

BD: I vaguely remember that, yeah.

JG: Do you know about...remember was it pretty stationary or did they go down the river a ways?

BD: It seems to me as I remember that operation that it was sort of like one of these little mobile gravel and they would just dredge, scoop it up out of the river. I remember the scoops that went up the sides of the river where they'd pulled the gravel up and out of it. And I don't think it was... I don't think it was any stationary thing. It was just like...oh, like when the highway department will move into an area, you know. That's the way I remember it, but, you know, I...

It was one of those things I wasn't payin' much attention to except that it was just being...being done, you know.

JG: Right.

BD: And the area that I seem to remember having the most change was right below the Oradell Bridge.

JG: I have dates way back as...dug out where the...put in the ol' R&N railroad in 1884. They worried about that flooding into the town and the whole facility so they evidently scooped that whole thing from Oradell clear down, but I don't know how far they went down river where they channeled it back that far, though, and then, of course, in the '50s they were taking rock out of there.

BD: Yeah. You know, we had an awful flood that...was it '68?

JG: '64 was the big...when they took the bridge...

BD: '64 was the big flood?

JG: Yeah, it took the bridge.

BD: And it flooded clear up and there was a foot of water there were Claudson's \_\_\_ is right in La Grande, you know, so...

JG: I saw some pictures that somebody had taken and saw that in downtown there.

BD: Right.

JG: The whole \_\_\_.

BD: But there used to be... There must have been...used to be a massive amount of flooding, Jerry, because I've talked to people that said they took a boat and rowboated from La Grande to Union.

JG: Uh, do you know, Bill, is there... 'Cause I haven't run... I mean, I've heard that, but do you remember anybody of when that would've been or...

BD: Oh, I think that was in the '30s, you know, somewhere in the mid-'30s.

JG: Do you know if there's anyone still around that would remember \_\_\_.

BD: I wish I could tell ya who those people were. But I remember this guy, he was kind of an old-timer, and we were talkin' about the valley or something and how...he was saying how the...this whole side of the valley would flood. And he said, "I rode a boat from La Grande to Union on the floodwater." And I assume that you've heard or know that the early days that Catherine Creek...until that ditch was made...that Catherine Creek just flooded in against the side of the hill and then it was just marshland.

JG: The...oh, what was it...1863 on that survey...land survey, the first one...right there at Hot Lake that... What I did, I mapped it out from what they...the maps they showed there they actually did two things, surveyed and it looked like probably what happened that was too deep of water in there they couldn't go across so they...they're straight lines, but they offset like they you do in surveying 'cause you can't go \_\_\_ on that.

BD: Right.

JG: And mapped that or...or took a \_\_\_ map and figured that about sixteen hundred acres was under water and it was formed by beaver dams. That was in 1863 that David Thompson had done that. And then when they did the state ditch they drained...that's when they drained all that...

BD: They drained that. That actually made them so-called Catherine Creek.

JG: Yeah, well, actually Catherine Creek came clear over and they actually cut...that's when they cut straight through.

BD: Right.

JG: They took a lot of Catherine Creek loop out of there. Because \_\_\_ and they could see goin' back out. And since then then Ladd Creek is the one that's coming out. That used to be part of Catherine Creek.

BD: That's what they told me is that...

JG: Kind of interesting to see how that...

BD: ...that Catherine Creek really was nothing but a swamp and a slough there and just sort of seepage then across the valley. I remember when they took the hard pan out of Ladd Marsh because when we came here and was early duck hunting, why, Ladd Marsh was twice as wide as it is now. And they had one of the biggest Caterpillar tractors that I've ever seen and it had hook arms and I saw it sitting about where the lower end of the present Ladd Marsh is. And they... I'm positive that they used that and they ripped out the hard pan and it dropped the water out of a major part of Ladd Marsh. Ladd Marsh was much, much, much bigger than it is now.

JG: Do you remember about what years that would've been?

BD: Oh, I would...let's see...Dick was starting to hunt with me. When was Dick born, Chris?

C: Uh, '55.

BD: '55. So he would've been eleven or twelve so somewhere around '66, '67 maybe when they ripped that out. Bill Brown ought to be able to tell you that.

JG: Bill remember a lot, but the dates escape him.

BD: I... The reason I remember it is my son Richard was startin' to hunt with me. So he would've been like twelve years old or somethin' like that. So somewhere around...

JG: \_\_\_ something to tie it to because, you know, the problem with Bill he says, well, I remember all these things but \_\_\_.

BD: I relate it, you know, what I was doing at the time and we went...we would hunt out there on that and we would duck hunt. We were... The... As you go along the Foothill Road we would start hitting the reeds way, way up past where the fence is now and then we would walk through that and then through cattails and we'd wade way out to duck hunt. And it... It just dropped the water way, way down on that.

JG: That's quite a ways, you know, down to where you run into...to...

BD: That's right, you know, and you factor...you go through a lot of reeds before you ever get to the toolies anymore, you know. It seems to me like that Ladd Marsh as such is probably half as big as it was in the '50s and early '60s.

JG: Yeah, 'cause I was here, but I never got over there.

BD: And so I was... I and the boys duck hunted all up and down Ladd Marsh. But I... That was the biggest Caterpillar tractor I've ever seen in my life. I don't know what DH or D10s or D12s or what, but that thing looked like twenty feet tall. And my understanding was that those arms they came up and I think there was eight of 'em come up like that and down and then they had a plow shaped

shear about that big on the bottom. And they said that that went twenty-two feet underground to rip the hard pan out.

C: —

JG: Oh boy!

C: That's the wheel of that critter.

JG: Oh boy! It's a really good size. [laughs] — a toy.

C: He is six feet tall.

JG: Oh jeeze. He's comin' ...just about too far above the center of the wheel. That's great.

BD: What pictures are those?

C: Those are from Mary.

BD: Oh yeah.

C: That in mining in Sparwood, British Columbia.

JG: Do you recall anything, Bill...going back to the meadow area of Limber Jim...do you recall anything up there right up the bottom of the meadow area?

BD: I used to hunt elk all over Limber Jim and Dry Beaver and Whodoo and I can't... No, I don't remember anything particular about those.

JG: They aren't big meadows in there, but...

BD: No.

JG: ...they've done some now they've gone back in and put some logs in there, you know, try and help that in there.

BD: That was one of my favorite elk hunting areas way back when. I was down at the Forest Service and I said, "Can you tell me whether the roads..." 'cause I knew that they'd closed off a lot of road... I said, "Can you tell me whether the roads that go up Dry Beaver and Whodoo and Limber Jim are still there?" And this woman looked at me like the most blank stare. She said, "I don't know what you're talking about." She said, "What number is it?"

JG: Yeah, I don't...[laughs]

BD: I said, "Number?" I said, "Everybody that's ever lived here knows where Dry Beaver and Whodoo and Limber Jim is!" I said, "I can't tell you anything about..."

JG: Get lost anymore.

BD: "...about numbers anymore, you know." And she said, "Well, if you don't have a number..." she's sittin' there, you know, with her computer, she says, "I can't tell you whether anything..."

JG: The whole world's changed.

BD: My gosh! I used to go up Limber Jim, that was one of my favorite ones and go up on the ridges and start, you know, down below and Dry Beaver and Whodoo and on up on the upper Grande Ronde. But, no, I don't remember anything particular and I haven't been up there, you know, for twenty or twenty-five years really to know what has been done.

JG: They've logged... They've, you know, pushed quite a few roads there, of course, they've closed a lot of those off. There's still the one that's open that goes in, I think, — if that's like the middle fork or whatever. Limber Jim you can go quite a ways back in there towards the lake. — they've blocked off —.



BD: Yeah. That's what I'd heard and I've quit the elk and deer hunting myself now and just let my family do it. We still get our deer and elk meat, keep our freezers loaded.

JG: \_\_\_ weather conditions.

BD: I don't have to get out. The grandkids are hunting and everything now. I haven't... I honestly haven't been on the upper Grande Ronde since they...since all this salmon recovery thing started and they moved the campgrounds and... I used to like to go trout fishing \_\_\_. I like to fly fish and I'd go up and we'd have a picnic in the evening at one of the...one of the... [phone ringing]

C: I'll get it.

BD: ...campgrounds along the river and then I'd fly fish in the evening and stuff. But I haven't done that for a long, long time.

JG: I guess the only other thing, do you remember anything about any Coho salmon up the Grande Ronde?

BD: No. I couldn't tell you the species at all of what was running in the...in the river. All we'd see is good-sized fish, you know, like this, in the river. And I can't tell ya what species they were at all. Never did hear.

JG: Okay. Yeah, that... I think that...

BD: I'm sorry I can't give you a lot...[tape interruption]...with even all these bad practices there was lots of salmon and lots of fish and...

JG: Yeah. Clear up into the probably the '70s you still had, you know, a fairly good run of salmon up Catherine.

BD: Yeah, you know, and so...

JG: And here's all these things that've...everything bad that could happen practically has gone on for...way back since 1860s.

BD: See, I don't think... I don't think the salmon recovery has any... I shouldn't get into my politics, Jerry, because I think the salmon recovery plan is a total waste and a total farce and is not gonna do a speck of good. Because I think it's been way, way over fished and if I had my way we'd take every particle of fishery out of the Columbia River so that the fish'd have a chance to come back up.

JG: Of course, the salmon, you know, you've got that whole cycle of what's happening in the ocean, what's happening on the whole Columbia before it ever gets to the headwaters.

BD: And I would... You go out with patrol boats and... 'Cause I saw on TV the last couple of years one of this Green Peace or somebody like that was taking videos of the Japanese and they were supposed to be catching hake and this bottom fish and they were bringing in tons of salmon! You know and they were jack salmon, twenty-two, twenty-six inches long and they would just bring up net after net after net of these jack salmon. They... They know where the river currents are and where the salmon are and they set the big nets and I would go out with boats and I'd say, "Hey, you know, you've got twenty-four hours to get your boats out of here because we're gonna blast ya out of the water!" You know, and that would be my policy because as long as they're takin' this immature salmons out in the...out in the currents of the...of ocean and then fishing the whole Columbia with nets and stuff in between, why, there's no chance of any fish coming back up Catherine Creek, you know. So I don't think salmon recovery is the matter of the

siltation and willows along the stream bank, I think it's the...it's the netting and over fishing in the river and over fishing in...especially the over fishing in the ocean.

JG: So you have some control on that.

BD: You know, I would just tell 'em you're not gonna take anymore of the fish that are going into the west coast streams and if we catch you out here we're gonna blow you out of the water.

JG: [laughs] \_\_ threats, you know \_\_.

BD: That's it. That's what my policy would be, you know, because I don't think... I think the salmon recovery plan is a total waste.

JG: It's like it's picking at us is the thing. \_\_ this upper habitat it's valuable to have that, but that's not the whole answer.

BD: You know, it's...the fish have to be able to get back to spawn and they have to be able to...

JG: You've gotta have some out there.

BD: You gotta have some fish coming to do it, you know. And I don't... I don't, uh,... I don't think the salmon recovery plan is, you know... What's being done is okay and it's good to have places to spawn, it's good to have logs and rocks in the river. I was up at Bird Track Springs the other day and they had this whole massive construction thing moving rocks and making holes and stuff. But when only one salmon in ten thousand has any chance of coming back, why, it's... I don't think it's ever gonna be a recovery. Sort of like "the good old days." Then, of course, the dams on the Snake River are, you know... You've heard my feelings about the Corps of Engineers. I think they should be totally taken out. Idaho Power would've had stream flow generation over there with the generators in the...in the stream flow. And the... But they Corps of Engineers do whatever they want to. It's just like on Catherine Creek when the...the whole hearing, the whole decision, the whole plot was to just go in Catherine Creek and take out the roots and the stuff that... And they were takin' out the cottonwoods and clearing the brush and everything for a hundred yards back on each side of the creek until Mark Henjam stopped 'em.

C: That was where the egret...

BD: No, the great blue heron...

C: ...great blue heron rookery was.

BD: I was telling him that they came within a hundred yards.

JG: That's why I couldn't figure when I went down in there I said, "Boy, this looks a lot different than I had remembered," you know. There's been a long time since I was in there. But then I flew it here last year, you know, you still some of the rookery, you know, the trees there.

BD: Yeah. There's a pretty good rookery. I walked my dog there two years ago and I counted twenty-six blue heron up in the trees.

JG: 'Cause I know that was a real favorite, you know, rookery.

BD: That's one of the biggest rookeries, I think, there is in Oregon.

JG: Wasn't there... Do you recall just downriver from Reinhart's through the gorge there's a rookery...

BD: There's a rookery there.

JG: ...in there of whether that's still existing?  
BD: It's still existing. We do our bird float trip through there. We put in...  
JG: I couldn't remember exactly where that is in regard to...within the canyon there, Bill.  
BD: It's before you get to Reinhart. Probably half-a-mile or three-quarters-of-a-mile upstream from Reinhart.  
JG: Okay.  
C: What's the name of that one road that goes across?  
BD: Uh, Reinhart Road.  
C: Oh, okay.  
BD: Reinhart Road and it's above that.  
C: Yeah.  
BD: And we put in either at what we call Hibbert Road, which that's not the name of it, but just after you get past Imbler there's a road that cuts down to the river.  
JG: Yeah.  
BD: We put in there or sometimes we'll put in on the Reinhart Road just over the bank and then we'll float through there then come out down at Indian Creek.  
JG: Yeah.  
BD: And we've had... The last two years we haven't been able to do it because the water's been so high that... Usually we would do that the last weekend in May or the first weekend in June. For the last two years... Last year you couldn't even find Willow Creek. It was flooded down in that...into the valley so thick there it was water clear from the canyon on one side to the other and it's just too hazardous for us because we're just floating in little tiny rubber rafts and little tiny boats and it's just too...  
JG: For some reason I was thinking it was down in the canyon, but that was from way back in the early '60s.  
BD: It is in the canyon there.  
JG: Oh.  
BD: It is really in a canyon. And the river... And I don't know the...the names of the... The only person that I know that lives along the bank is the dental...uh...lab man, Wilbur. Dale Wilbur has his ranch and he's the one that has the mules.  
JG: There coming... 'Cause from Indian Creek you can come back upriver, you know, were as going down...downriver through the gorge there that's blocked where the bridge is or just before that where the old crossing was that went over the railroad track.  
BD: We can still float the river.  
JG: Yeah, I know, but I meant as far as the roads...  
BD: The roads you can't go in there anymore.  
JG: Yeah, you can't. It's all blocked off.  
BD: Right. But Dale Wilbur's place...it has the mules on the opposite side of the river...and it's just below his place. And his place is that you've gotta cross over the river and then wind the road up above the hill on the other side. And then the road... We put wood duck boxes and we put bird boxes in there. We had goose nest boxes in there. I can tell you about where it is from across the way because

there was a horse in the river and Bill Brown walked up the place on the left-hand side there's a really nice new house been built up on the left-hand side.

C: Just before you get to Hamburger Hill.

BD: Just there. And so if you took...project from that place down straight across the river that's just about where it is. And it makes two or three big sweeping turns like that and then goes into the canyon at Reinhart's. But it actually is entering pretty rocky cliff canyon there.

JG: Oh yeah.

BD: It's... And there's a kind of a... On the left-hand side of the river as we're going down there's a swampy sloughy spot with a bunch of big cottonwoods and that's where we put wood duck boxes. And on the right-hand side the river makes a big swing and the heron rookery is there. The last time we were through I think we counted about eight or ten herons on nests in there. It's a small one. Not near... I counted twenty-six heron on nests out here two years ago when I walked my dog on the dyke.

JG: I was way back in the early '60s out there with Jerry Strickland. That's, of course, when you could still drive down on through there...

BD: Right.

JG: ...through the canyon.

BD: Right.

JG: It kind of escaped me, you know, where that's changed up exactly where that was. Do you... One other thing, did you ever recall...and that had to be back in the '60s...of the night heron nest of where that was or where...?

BD: Oh, I saw a night heron on nests out in Ladd Marsh.

JG: This one... This...

BD: Was there a special...?

JG: It had to be over towards...either towards the airport or coming out this way from the airport.

BD: No.

JG: 'Cause I... Johnny Wright took me out there and I didn't know the road, you know, out in the valley, you know. And so I, you know, one of those things I wasn't paying any attention and he was doin' the drivin'. But there's a big grove of trees there...

BD: And there were night heron.

JG: And there were a whole slug of night heron nestin' in there.

BD: No, I never...never'd heard about that.

JG: 'Cause I, you know, for the life of me I can't place that where it is and, of course, it's probably been torn down.

BD: The only night herons I...and some of the big trees on Ladd Marsh looking off of the Foothill Road. You know, where they moved the old...the old Munsey house...where they moved the old house on the right-hand side, you know, then as you look down there's that big...lot of big cottonwood trees there and there were night herons in there. That's the only ones I'd ever seen.

JG: 'Cause this would've had to been over... 'Cause I think what we did we came down by Davis Dan and \_\_ slough, you know, Wilkinson and out towards the airport. But some...[end tape]